

## **WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

### **COMMITTEE: SOCIAL SERVICES**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 22, 2008**

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS    TESSIER  
                     O'CONNOR  
                     SHEEHAN  
                     BENTLEY  
                     KENNY  
                     THOMAS  
                     STRAINER

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

REPRESENTING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES:

                     ROBERT PHELPS, COMMISSIONER  
                     MICHAEL JABAUT, DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE  
   SERVICES  
                     KATHY BAKER, FISCAL MANAGER  
                     FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN  
                     HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER, ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL  
   SERVICES  
                     JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
                     KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER  
                     JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Social Services Committee to order at 11:19 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Robert Phelps, Commissioner, Department of Social Services (DSS), who distributed copies of his agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Beginning with the pending items portion of the agenda, Mr. Phelps informed the Committee that the issue of Janitorial Services for DSS Medicaid staff in the former CNA building had been taken care of. Mr. Phelps stated that he had worked with Frank Morehouse, Superintendent of Buildings, and confirmed that the trash was being removed daily, and the offices were being vacuumed on a weekly basis. Mr. Phelps advised that this item could be removed from the referral list.

Next, Mr. Phelps requested permission for employees to attend in-state meetings or conventions as follows:

- Shawn Mileski and Melissa Wilkins to attend the New York State Police Sex Offense Seminar in Albany, New York from May 19, 2008 to May 23, 2008;
- Leslie Arone to attend the New York State Child Abuse Prevention Conference in Albany, New York from April 7, 2008 to April 9, 2008; and
- Liana Depew, Diane Coughlin and Meghan Gorman to attend the Sex Abuse Training for Child Welfare in Albany, New York from April 16, 2008 to April 18, 2008.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the in-state travel requests as outlined above. *Copies of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention forms are on file with the minutes.*

Kathy Baker entered the meeting at 11:21 a.m.

Referring to the first item on the agenda, Mr. Phelps requested permission to fill vacant positions as follows:

- Caseworker, newly created position included in the 2008 budget, base salary of \$33,590, Grade 14;
- Social Welfare Examiner, Employee No. 6478, base salary of \$28,697, Grade 8, due to promotion;
- Senior Account Clerk, Employee No. 10764, base salary of \$27,559, Grade 7, due to promotion;
- Typist, Employee No. 10551, base salary of \$22,988, Grade 3, due to promotion;
- Resource Clerk, Employee No. 10847, base salary of \$24,059, Grade 4, due to promotion; and
- Supervising Support Investigator, Employee No. 6736, base salary of \$34,564, Grade 15, due to transfer.

Mr. Phelps apprised that the Supervising Support Investigator was due to the transfer of an employee to the Sheriff's Office. Mr. Phelps noted the urgency regarding the replacement of this position as the other supervising employee would be out on extended medical leave in the near future.

Motion was made by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the requests to fill vacant positions as presented; and to refer same to the Personnel Committee. *Copies of the Notices of Intent to Fill Vacant Position forms are on file with the minutes.*

Continuing with the issue of vacancies, Mr. Phelps said that he also wished to discuss an upcoming Social Welfare Examiner vacancy. He advised that the vacancy was a result of a retirement in the Food Stamp unit, and he noted that the employees last day would be April 3, 2008 therefore the position would need to be filled next month.

Mr. Tessier inquired as to when approval would be appropriate, and Mr. Phelps replied that he is requesting advance approval from the Committee at this time.

Motion was made by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. O'Connor and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the upcoming vacant position of Social Welfare Examiner as outlined above, and to refer same to the Personnel Committee.

Mr. Phelps thanked the Committee and stated that he would prepare a Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position and obtain the appropriate signatures for approval.

Proceeding to the next item on the agenda, Mr. Phelps referred the Committee to the Overtime Report included in the agenda. He stated that there was an increase in overtime for the pay periods ending on January 20<sup>th</sup> and February 3<sup>rd</sup> due to the move to the CNA building. Additionally, he said, a vacancy in the Medicaid Office created a backlog situation. He noted that the Food Stamp program also recognized a backlog situation as a result of some changes in the program which included expanding eligibility and increasing caseloads. He added that the staff was struggling to maintain efficiency.

In response to an inquiry from Mr. Tessier, Mr. Phelps articulated to the Committee that the offices that were occupying the CNA building were the Medicaid Eligibility Office and Coordinated Care staff only.

Moving to agenda item number three, Mr. Phelps requested to amend the County budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$32,000 to purchase furnishings related to the Medicaid move to Monument Center (the former CNA building).

Mr. Phelps expounded that they needed to establish panels to segregate office work areas from visitors in the waiting area. Temporary partitions had been set up to meet their immediate needs; however, he said, a permanent, workable arrangement would need to be completed. Mr. Phelps informed the Committee that he was working with Clark Patterson & Associates to not only satisfy the current office needs at the former office, but also to best serve the needs in the new building as well. He added that the anticipated cost was approximately \$32,000, under State contract, which would be fully reimbursed.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to amend the County budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$32,000 to purchase furnishings related to the Medicaid move to the Monument Center, and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request is on file with the minutes.*

Moving to the final agenda item, Mr. Phelps presented the Warren County Department of Social Services Annual Statistical Report for 2007 (a supplement to the Annual Report), *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Phelps explained that each year he provided the County and this Committee with a comprehensive report typically completed in May or June. In the interim, he presented a statistical report as herewith distributed. He noted in some cases the report reflected 2006 data, that being the most current information available.

Mr. Phelps made noteworthy to the Committee that these figures reflected how the County was doing in relation to other districts of similar size, while comparing year to year figures.

Mr. Phelps proceeded to review the report before the Committee. After reviewing the report in full, Mr. Tessier called for any questions. With no questions from the Committee at this time, Mr. Phelps invited the Committee to contact him at any time should questions arise in this regard.

In reference to yesterday's Inter-county Legislative Committee Meeting at Essex County, Mr. Tessier raised the issue of detention home costs. Mr. Tessier advised that it was discussed at the meeting that 100 percent of detention home costs would be the responsibility of the County, and he added, funding from the State would no longer be available. Mr. Phelps noted that he had this issue written in as his final agenda item for today, and he said, this was an issue of significance. He apprised the Committee that the problem was that the County had a six bed detention facility that was currently operating and the six beds were contracted out to other districts. He said that with a 100 percent local share for operation of a detention home, districts preferred to pay as needed, as opposed to buying beds. Mr. Phelps further explained that for host counties such as Warren County, these facilities were going to close down unless the County was prepared to assume the fiscal responsibility for a six bed facility that typically would be filled with two recipients. He added that the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC) was fighting this issue. He noted there may be some negotiations regarding the State and local contributory percentages such as a 65 State/35 Local versus the current 50/50 ratio (preventative services was at a split of 65 State/35 Local). Currently, he said, 100 percent was locally funded. Mr. Phelps asserted that he planned to meet with Berkshire Farms in the near future to discuss this matter. The likely outcome, he stated, would be the non-secured detention facilities, including Berkshire, would be forced to close down around the State. He advised that secured detention was the only alternative and was very costly.

Ms. Kathy Baker, DSS Fiscal Manager, interjected, that she was involved in placement, and she apprised the Committee that secured detention is not available for an estimated half of the population that would normally be placed in detention, which were the individuals referred to the Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS) program. She added that her Department had looked at the use of autonomic monitoring in lieu of detention, and were currently researching other options, as well.

Mr. Phelps stated that the County had been able to reduce detention costs. He said that this was a major issue to be addressed, and the County was seeing the unintended consequences of shifting the fiscal burden to the local level.

Mr. Tessier requested an executive session to discuss the employment history of a particular individual.

Motion was made by Mr. O'Connor, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously that executive session be declared pursuant to Section 105 (f) of the Public Officers Law.

Executive session was declared from 11:46 a.m. until 12:01 p.m.

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Committee reconvened and Mr. Tessier noted that no action was necessary pursuant to the executive session.

With no further business to come before the Committee, on motion made by Mr. O'Connor and seconded by Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 12:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist